

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-14, without prejudice.

Please add new claims 15-18, as specified in the following listing of claims.

The listing of claims given below will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Canceled)
3. (Canceled)
4. (Canceled)
5. (Canceled)
6. (Canceled)
7. (Canceled)
8. (Canceled)
9. (Canceled)
10. (Canceled)
11. (Canceled)
12. (Canceled)
13. (Canceled)
14. (Canceled)

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15. (New) A circuit for operating a discharge lamp (LA), the circuit comprising:
an inverter (T1,T2) for supplying the lamp with alternating current, the inverter having an operating frequency, the inverter comprising:

at least one transistor switching unit (T2) having a gate; and

a current limiting device (T3,D1,D2,D3,C3) coupled to the gate of the at least one transistor switching unit (T2), wherein the current limiting device is operable to switch the at least one transistor unit on and off as a function of a current flowing through the at least one transistor unit.

16. (New) The circuit of claim 15, further comprising:

a load circuit (L1-A,C1,C2) connected between the inverter and the lamp, the load circuit having a resonant frequency; and

a phase setting device (R2,C2,L2) connected to the gate of the at least one transistor switching unit (T2), the phase setting device being operable to match the operating frequency of the inverter to the resonant frequency of the load circuit.

17. (New) The circuit of claim 15, wherein:

the at least one transistor switching unit (T2) is connected to ground via a first resistor (R1); and

the current limiting device comprises:

a switching device (T3) having a base, an emitter, and a collector, wherein the emitter is connected to ground;

a capacitor (C3) coupled between the base of the switching device (T3) and ground;

a first zener diode (D1) coupled between the first resistor (R1) and the base of the switching device (T3);

a second zener diode (D2) coupled between the collector of the switching device (T3) and ground; and

a third zener diode (D3) coupled between the gate of the at least one transistor switching unit (T2) and the collector of the switching device (T3).

18. (New) The circuit of claim 17, further comprising:
a load circuit (L1-A,C1,C2) connected between the inverter and the lamp, the load circuit having a resonant frequency; and
a phase setting device (R2,C2,L2) connected to the gate of the at least one transistor switching unit (T2), the phase setting device being operable to match the operating frequency of the inverter to the resonant frequency of the load circuit.

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